(b) if so, the details thereof including the outcome of the meeting;

(c) whether any new proposals were discussed; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ANNASAHEB M.K. PATIL): (a) and (b) Yes Sir, a National Conference was held on 27-28 January, 2003, in New Delhi which was attended by Ministers and Secretaries of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Public Works Departments of States. The conference was inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister. All major centrally sponsored programmes being funded by the Ministry of Rural Development were reviewed and the issues related to implementation of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act were discussed. The States were requested to expedite the utilization of funds provided under these programmes. A new scheme "Haryali" was also launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on the occasion.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Decline in textile exports

4319. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) what are the main reasons for continuous decline in india's textile exports; and

(b) the steps taken by Government to boost its export?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI BASANGOUDA R. PATIL): (a) The textile exports had recorded a growth of 10.1% in 1999-2000 and 14.6% in 2000-2001, but shown a negative growth of 11.0% in 2001-2002.

The major reason for negative growth of textile exports during the year 2001-02 were the reduced global demand triggered by the slowdown in the economies of some of our major trading partners like US, increasing polarization of world trade, formation of preferential trading blocks and stiff competition from low cost suppliers like Bangladesh, China, etc.

As per the available DGCIS export data, the textile exports during the period April-December 2002 have amounted to US$ 8849.4 million which when compared with the exports of US$ 7814.6 million during

the corresponding period of 2001 show a growth of 13.2%. This indicates the downtrend in textile exports has been reversed and they are back on path of export growth.

(b) Government have been taking a number of measures to boost textile exports. Some of the important initiatives are:—

(i) The Government has de-reserved the woven segment of readymade garment from the SSI sector. It has also raised the SSI investment limit for knitted segment to Rs. 5 crores.

(ii) The Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) has been made operational from 1-4-1999 to facilitate the modernisation and upgradation of the sector.

(iii) Weaving, processing and garment machinery, which are covered under TUFS, have been extended the facility of accelerated depreciation at the rate of 50%. Cost of machinery has also been reduced through Fiscal Policy measures. This further encourages modernisation.

(iv) With a view to encouraging backward integration, the custom duty on shuttleless looms and other important textile machinery items has been brought down to 5%.

(v) National Institute for Fashion Technology (NIFT), its six branches and Apparel Training & Design Centres (ATDCs) are running various coruses/programmes to meet skilled manpower requirements of textile industry especially apparel in the field of design, merchandising and marketing.

(vi) Facilities by way of eco-testing laboratories have been created to enable exporters to get the garments/textiles pre-tested for conforming to the requirements of importing countries.

(vii) The Government has launched a centrally sponsored scheme titled "Apparel Park for Export Scheme" for imparting focused thrust for setting up of apparel manufacturing units of international standards at potential growth centres and to give fillip to exports.

(viii) For upgrading infrastructure facilities at important textile centres, a scheme 'Textile Centre Infrastructure Development Scheme, (TCIDS) has been launched.